



[Rowe residents to vote on joining regional school sustainability study](#)

By Madison Schofield, Staff Writer, The Greenfield Recorder Published: 09-23-2025

ROWE — The town may join the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional school districts in its pursuit of a single campus, depending on the results of a Special Town Meeting vote.

Voters at an upcoming Town Meeting will be asked to approve spending \$10,000 to join the Two Districts, Eight Towns Sustainability Study. Last spring, after looking at dwindling enrollment and rising costs, the 2 District, 8 Town Steering Committee, or 2D8T, voted to recommend further exploration of a single-campus model for the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional school districts, which would bring all staff members and students in preschool through 12th grade together at one location.

“As far as Rowe is concerned, Rowe has been a non-voting representative. We are not a part of the regional school district. Rowe is its own school district, and we tuition our students grades seven through 12 to Mohawk,” Rowe School Committee Chair Susan Zavotka told members of the Selectboard and Finance Committee on Monday. “We’ve had a non-voting representative on the sustainability study, but we were not included in any of the data gathering that happened.”

Zavotka said that due to a miscommunication, Rowe was not included in the initial study, and while that miscommunication is “water under the bridge,” the town needs to decide if it wants to join the study now as it heads into Phase 3.

Jake Eberwein, a project manager with the Pittsfield-based Berkshire Educational Resources K-12 (BERK12), which has been managing the study, said that last year, BERK12 looked at the past and present conditions of the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont districts, and modeled future options for enrollment and finances. This year, he said, BERK12 and the steering committee will be looking at more detailed models, impacts on transportation and possible uses for the school buildings that would be closed under a single-campus education model. BERK12 is also tasked with drafting a new regional agreement that could be voted on by the towns at Special Town Meetings next fall.

Zavotka said that with a new regional agreement in the works, now is the time for Rowe to decide if it wants to join the study and, subsequently, the district. To get the town caught up with the data collection, modeling and public outreach that BERK12 has already completed for the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont member towns, an initial \$10,000 would be needed from Rowe. A public presentation would be held for BERK12 to present its initial findings and the steering committee’s goals for the district. Then, if Rowe residents express their support for learning more about the possibility of joining the district, an additional \$25,000 would be spent on further modeling of sustainable options.

“We’re feeling, as a School Committee, we should go ahead with the study,” Zavotka said. Finance Committee members expressed concern that joining the study, and eventually the district, could mean closing Rowe Elementary School, which the town had rebuilt in 2014 following a fire. Members added that renovating the Mohawk Trail Regional School campus and building a new

elementary school would be expensive, and questioned what would come of all the shuttered school buildings.

“A town without a school is not a town,” said Finance Committee Chair Dan Pallotta. “Building a new school when you have all these schools makes no sense.”

The BERK12 study found that, of five potential models, creating a single campus would create the most cost savings, between \$3.4 million and \$5.3 million, and the most possibilities for educational improvements. Renovating the Mohawk Trail Regional School could cost anywhere from \$51.5 million to \$110.3 million, and constructing a new school could cost between \$100 million and \$145 million. The Massachusetts School Building Authority could pay for as much as 80% of the project.

The Mohawk Trail School Committee has applied to join the MSBA process and expects to hear back in December whether it will be entered into the queue for funding and design support.

Rowe town officials also questioned whether the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont towns would welcome Rowe into the district and give its representatives voting rights.

Hawlemont School Committee member Ken Bertsch told Rowe town officials that he has heard from residents and officials in other towns who have said they are in favor of Rowe joining the district. Some say Rowe’s membership would provide financial and educational benefits, and others hope that if Rowe were to join, the Rowe Elementary School could be kept open so students in the far reaches of Heath and Charlemont would not have to travel as far to get to school in the morning.

“Some want Rowe in because maybe there’s a chance we could sustain a school in west, West County,” Bertsch said.

Eberwein added that when creating a new regional agreement, all towns involved would need to approve it, and the agreement would outline representation and voting rights.

John Franzoni, superintendent of the Northern Berkshire School Union, said that conducting a study would give the town the information it needs to make decisions about the school’s future.

“That’s the whole point of being in the study. We don’t know what we don’t know,” Franzoni said. “Right now we’re just kind of speculating.”

Selectboard and Finance Committee members agreed that spending at least \$10,000 on the initial study would give them, and the town’s residents, a better understanding of the possible futures for the town’s schoolchildren.

“I believe that Rowe should be a good neighbor and be a part of the district,” Selectboard member Marilyn Wilson said.

“I’m in favor of investigating more,” Selectboard member Bill Baker added.

The Selectboard voted unanimously to recommend the \$10,000 study to Special Town Meeting voters, though the date of the meeting has yet to be determined. If voters approve the initial expense and further outreach is conducted, the board will decide whether to come to voters again requesting an additional \$25,000.

Source: <https://recorder.com/2025/09/23/rowe-to-join-school-sustainability-study/>